

Milton Thomas Hurst: Ready, action?

Q: And action.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Okay.

Q: Oral history number 410. The following oral history interview was conducted by Commander Bill Scallion and Jack Green for the Naval Historical Center, Washington, DC, and for the National Park Service, USS Arizona Memorial, at the Ala Moana Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii, on December 6, 2001, at 12:46 p.m. The person being interviewed is Milton T. Hurst, who was an airman machinist third class on the USS Arizona on December 7, 1941. Is that correct, Mr. Hurst?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Almost. You said airman. Aircraft.

Q: At that time it was aircraft, okay. For the record, please state your full name, place of birth and date of birth.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Okay. Milton Thomas Hurst. I was born in North East Pennsylvania, September 10, 1920.

Q: Where in Pennsylvania? Was it called North East?

Milton Thomas Hurst: North East, in two words. North East. It's, uh.. east of Erie and west of Buffalo. It's right almost-- on the keystone. It's in the keystone of Pennsylvania.

Q: So it's northeast.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yep.

Q: What did you consider to be your home town in 1941?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Sherman, New York. Well, it's about ten miles northeast in New York.

Q: What were your parents' names?

Milton Thomas Hurst: My father's name was Arthur Hurst. My mother's name was Florence Waterman Hurst.

Q: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I have four brothers and three sisters.

Q: And where did you go to high school?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Sherman, New York.

Q: Where and why did you enlist?

Milton Thomas Hurst: <Laughing> You want the short version or the real truth?

Q: The real truth.

Milton Thomas Hurst: I was down visiting my dad in Olean, New York. He was the-- worked in a big machine shop there. And uh.. I was just out of high school. I think I was 18 or 19, I guess, maybe. And I was just walking around trying to find a job, and you remember the old poster, "I want you" by the post office at Olean? And that's why I walked up and- and he said, "I think you'll make it." And so I did. And so, he took the basic information, and I guess about three or four weeks later called me and said, "Come on down. You're going to Buffalo to be enlisted."

Q: In the Navy, I assume.

Milton Thomas Hurst: So-- pardon?

Q: In the Navy, I assume?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I didn't hear you.

Q: In the Navy?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yes. In the Navy. Uh-huh. Enlisted in the Navy and went to Newport, Rhode Island. Uh.. I enlisted on the 13th of December 1939 and went to Rhode Island and was there for six weeks. Uh.. they-- kind of a short training, it was right then. And then, uh.. shipped out to San Diego, and uh.. from San Diego final got my final orders to the Arizona, which was in the Long Beach Harbor, up in Long Beach, California.

Q: So when did you report to the Arizona?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Uh.. 1st of March 1940.

Q: What division were you assigned to?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I was assigned to the Second Division to begin with, Foksal [ph?] Division on the port side. I was uh.. there-- I don't know how long I was there, but not too long. But then I-- they put out a call on the plan of the day for applications for go to V [ph?] division, and I put in for that and luckily, Paul Pace, who was our division bosun [ph?], was on vacation. And when he came back, I was in the aviation division. He said, "Hurst, I was gonna make you the best bosun mate in the Navy." And I said, "I'm glad I'm in aviation." <Laughing> So...

Q: Why did you want aviation? Well, I know why you wanted out at deck, but why did you want aviation?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Uh.. I didn't have much aptitude for Holystone [ph?] and Jacks [ph?]. <Laughing> But I thought I had some aptitude as a mechanic, so, and not only that, uh.. I was a future farmer in high school, and, uh.. Ensign Bladesdale that interviewed me, was a future farmer out of Iowa, so that's how I got in. <Laughing> So we sat there talking about farming when-- instead of aviation, and that's how I got in.

Q: How many people were in the division at that time?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, golly. Gotta be twenty.

Q: And how many aircraft were you working with?

Milton Thomas Hurst: We had three. We had three SOC's at that time.

Q: So, any preliminary stuff before we get this <inaudible>? I am going to take you to December 6th, 1941. What were you doing the day before?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Uh.. we'd been-- can we go back just a little bit earlier than that?

Q: Sure. Yeah.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Okay. In the summer of '40, uh.. I got orders to go to aircraft instrument school. I'd just made third class and went aircraft instrument school in Philadelphia, and then graduated from there and went on up to Sperry gyro school in- in Brooklyn. And that's where I met my wife, m- met my girlfriend there. And, uh.. then I rode the Schauma [ph?] back from Brooklyn, and Schauma, you know about the old Schauma? The old troop transporter?

Q: Transport.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. Uh.. through the canal and arrived back at Pearl Harbor aboard ship on Thanksgiving Day before the 7th. And so, we made one trip at sea and came back in, and, uh.. the 7th happened.

Q: Do you recall what you were doing on the 6th?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Let's see. That must have been a Saturday.

Q: That was a Saturday, yeah.

Milton Thomas Hurst: That was just a routine work day I- I think, is all. I know what I was- was gonna do Sunday morning.

Q: What was that?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I was gonna go play tennis over at Aiea, just waiting there by the quarter deck to go play tennis, and I still don't know what happened to that tennis racket. <Laughing> It's gone.

Q: So you had duty on Saturday night or did you just stay on board?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, stayed on board. I didn't go ashore much.

Q: Okay. So Sunday, December 7th, you're getting ready to play tennis. What did you see?

Milton Thomas Hurst: What'd I see?

Q: What'd you see? What'd you hear? What were your experience on the 7th?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh. Well, uhm.. you're-- of course, you're not familiar with the layout, but on the, just forward of- of the quarter deck, uh.. where the galley deck goes up just inside there on the star board side was the aviation workshop and also athwart [ph?] ships was the marine compartment, and- and over on the port side was the personnel office. So that gives you a general area. I was just standing in there, waiting for, uh.. colors to go so they could call away the boats to go to Aiea. Well, while I was in there, the first word I heard was they call away the fire and rescue party. And I've never seen that in any report, but that was made, and I've asked other people, and they say, "I- we don't remember that." But I know that's what I heard. Called away the fire and rescue for Ford Island. And then about two or three minutes later, why, they, uh.. cancelled that out, but then I just walked out of the compartment and looked over the side, and sure enough, they needed help over at Ford Island. It was the first I knew anything because it was smoking and, uh.. hanger was hit, or planes were hit or something over on Ford Island. So, I guess I- I don't know what I- I did. I guess I walked back in there and- and pretty soon they, uh.. passed the word,

uh.. for all hands on the weather deck, or on the deck get below the armor deck. So, uh.. I started down to get down in the armor deck, which is second deck down, and, uh.. I was going down that ladder when the word came, general quarters. Well, below the armor deck wasn't my general quarters station.

Q: Where was that?

Milton Thomas Hurst: It was up in the marine compartment. We were-- the aviation group was, uh.. part of the, uh.. repair party. That was-- was our station. So, there was some marine, I don't know, some marine officer--I don't know who it was; I'd like to know, but I don't think he was with us today--was coming down the ladder as I was trying to sneak underneath him, and he was just clubbing people down and no-- enforcing getting underneath that armor deck. Well, I snuck out underneath him and went on up to, uh.. the marine compartment, and glad I did, of course. And, uh.. then from there just out on to the quarter deck area, and uh.. got some fire hoses and- and that was trying to help people and, uh.. went down below, uh.. into the officer's quarter down one hatch, but, uh.. there was nothing you could do down in there. It was just black smoke, and- and you had to get out of there just as quick as you could. And, uh.. I was, uh.. between number three barbet [ph?] and a big, uh.. air uptake to, on the-- maybe on port side just slightly, uh.. ____ the number three barbet when it blew up. And- and I got thrown up against the barbet and back against the- the uptake. But, uh.. I really wasn't hurt at all, uh.. so I got up and, uh.. started, uh.. doing what I could. And there was people laying there, and you- you try to help them up and you grab them by the arm and, you know, you <making squishing sound> just slide off, and they're dead and this type thing. Nothing you could do but try to fight the fires, of course. There's no capability to fight fires. We pulled out the fire hose and that, but there's nothing you could do because there was no pressure. So, uh.. we were just there on the deck and finally Commander Fuqua, or I guess he was Lieutenant Commander at that time, said, "Get off." So, went over the side and went down onto the blister and then, uh.. jumped in the water and swam over to Ford Island. And people have asked me, "Well, how about the oil?" And I said, "I don't recall ever having any trouble with oil." And I think the reason was, see, the Nevada was behind us and she was- was pulling out. A good friend of mine got blown off in the- the big blast, Glenn Lane, got blown off into the water, and he c- finally went aboard the Nevada and rode her out until she beached herself. So, he and I were in the same division. But, uh.. went over to Ford Island and, uh.. climbed up the bank and, uh.. I didn't know it, but somebody said, "Well, get into the shelter down there." So, walked down and got into what at that time looked like a-

just an old ammunition dump type of- of shelter. What it really was was the gunning [ph?] placement that was buried underground. Well, I was in there about ten, fifteen minutes, I guess, and man, I went to sleep. I don't know what was going on, but I was- I went to sleep. So, I woke up and interesting part of it is, yesterday, you ask me what I did yesterday, I'll tell you what I did yesterday. Went aboard Ford Island with my son and, uh.. we were walking around and I'm showing him all these things, where I was and how it come up and all that, and th- there's a bomb shelter on here that I got into after I climbed up that bank there. And I am going to see if I can't find it. Well, he was lollygagging behind me, and I was walking by the CNN crew that's over there on Ford Island. So I walked by them and- and I said hi, and walked down there, and my son went down there, and he squealed on me.
<Laughing>

Q: You didn't want to talk to them, I gather?

Milton Thomas Hurst: So, here comes CNN, cameraman and reporter and the whole business trailing along and- and wanted an interview. And I said, "No, I don't- I don't give many interviews. I'm looking for a bomb shelter that I went into after I swam over here from Ford Island."

Q: Did you find it?

Milton Thomas Hurst: But those buggers-- yeah, I'll tell you about it.
<Laughing> I'll- I'll get- you get me going, you aren't gonna stop me. So, uh.. they tagged along, and they were taking pictures and- and asking me questions and all this. And- and finally we walked around the end of the island, and I couldn't find that bomb shelter. I could see one way off there at the end of the runway, but I didn't think it was that far away, but we were turning and- and coming back, uh.. the other end of the island, kind of banding [ph?] and walked across a fellow's yard there that was out there with his dog. So I walked over and introduced myself. I knew I was in officers' country. So, uh.. walked over there and introduced myself, told him what I was wanting to find out. And Captain Johnson, his name is, uh.. so, he says, "Gosh, I don't know. I- I hear stories, but, uh.. let me call my wife. She and the kids know more about what's around here than I do." So he called his wife out. And we chatted and I related some of this stuff to them. And she said, "Well, I think it's underneath the admiral's house, but let- let me call his wife." So she called his wife, and by golly, she came out. And I do it-- told the story. And what gracious people. Good gosh all fish hooks, the nicest,

and a beautiful woman, the admiral's wife, who-- I don't know, you know, I don't even know his name. Do you know his name?

M1: Well, I've met his wife. I forgot the admiral's name. But yes, I've been in the shelter. I know it.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. You know, well, I wondered why you was going like this. So, she showed me where this shelter was, and sure enough, that was it. And I didn't see it because it's kind of hid with their house and all that.

Q: Foundation for the admiral's house, yeah.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. So, we walked in there, and we took a bunch of pictures, and we talked, then I'd found what I wanted. I was happy. So, they- they carried on there an interview for a f- little bit and took those pictures. And I told them then, uh.. the only sh- the only thing I want you to really take a picture of, if you ever show this, is Milty finding his bomb shelter <laughing> that he-- that he found on the 7th.

Q: Let me back you up to the 7th for a bit. While you were waiting for the launch, did you see any aircraft coming over?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, yeah. Sure. Sure. Uh.. well, like I've told stories a few times before, uh.. God, if you just had a peck of potatoes <laughing>, I know I could've flung 'em and hit those airplanes. It was that- that close. Yeah, you could see them. They were coming across our fan tail and- and kind of swinging. I think those are the ones probably that went over to the Utah. Uh.. but, yeah, they were low flying and look over toward the submarine base, they was coming down the channel, torpedo planes and that. Uh.. I didn't see any of the, uh.. high altitude bombers. I didn't see those, but uh.. yeah, it was, uh.. exciting, uh.. dangerous, I guess. But there's one thing, I- as I told the admiral's wife, and that was yesterday, and CNN, here you in the-- right in the middle of a- a battle and nerves, didn't know what to do, and gosh, you-- all this and worried a little bit, and you-- I don't know if you've ever read Shakespeare or not, but uh.. I think everybody knows that one passage, "All the world is but a stage, and on that stage we are but bit players." That passage runs through my mind, <phew> calm me right down. I'm do-- I'm okay. I'm on-- I'm just on a stage, I'm gonna get off

okay. And it's funny, you know, you had no business thinking of things like that, but...

Q: So, you could feel, once you thought that, you were calmed down, I gather?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yes. Calmed me right down, yeah. And it was a very calming influence. And so, I like to tell people about that because perhaps they've had thoughts, you know, uh.. abstract, didn't mean a thing to the situation you was in, but it- it has a tendency to calm you down.

Q: How many friends did you lose on that day?

Milton Thomas Hurst: How many what?

Q: How many friends did you lose that day?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, really, uh.. they were in the aviation gang. Uh.. well, gosh, Bovial [ph?], Hank, oh, gosh, I don't-- not too many. The aviation gang was kinda- kinda lucky. I can't even recall all their- their names now. But, uh.. there- there was probably six or eight in the aviation gang that- that didn't make it. Uh.. two of them, two of them were second class, uh.. Bovial and Hank Langdon, uhm.. our workshop was just inside the quarter deck, and- and there were bunks in there. Uh.. and, of course, they'd want to sleep in. So, they were roused out and told them, "Hey, get out of there. The Japs are bombing us." And Hank says, "Go away. I've been in this Navy long enough to know better than that." Well, he didn't know better than that. <Laughing> And that- that's where they got him, right there. It's just those, uh.. seconds, you know, that pass in your life that either you get through or you don't get through.

Q: Any seconds during that day that just really stuck out in your mind?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Did what?

Q: Any seconds that day that really stuck in your mind?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I don't think so. I think the- the worst thing that sticks in my mind, and I don't really even think about it, is reaching down and having flesh come off from people. That's, uh.. the most horrible thing, and trying to help and then you have to make that decision, there's no use trying. And-- and you hate to do that, but, uh.. the only other thing that bothered me was I didn't like the smell of welding for a long time because that burning steel, uh.. stayed with me for a long time, nor did I like the sound of a whistle or a siren. But, uh.. I guess that lasted a couple- couple, three years. But I- I don't feel like I've got any trauma left in me or anything, uh.. about it now. It doesn't bother me a bit, and didn't-- hadn't for years.

Q: After you woke up in the bunker, what did-- what kind of-- what did you do after that?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh. Uhm.. I think I walked down toward the Ad building in Ford Island, and uh.. I guess there was some boats down there. And we went over to, uh.. the receiving station was over there that night. And then, uh.. I think it was one more day in there, and by that time, uh.. they said, "You've got to get back to your own units." Well, what happened then, uh.. we lost an awful lot of airplanes, uh.. for-- off the battleships and cruisers and that, the OS2Us and the SOCs and, uh.. on Ford Island. But there was enough left there to where we salvaged enough to make a little squadron, uh.. still on float plane to, you know, in close submarine patrol. And, uh.. that was, uh.. squadron was VS- VS53D14. <Laughing> I'll never forget it. What a designator, huh?

Q: That's quite a designator, yeah.

Milton Thomas Hurst: So, but, uh.. you know, we were in, uh.. the fleet while we kept one of the hangers right there out near the sea plane ramp. It's gone now, but uh.. and then, uh.. I guess I was probably stayed with them maybe two, three months in that squadron. And then our division chief, uh.. was an old- older man, and uh.. he said, "Didn't you go to instrument school?" And I answered yes. He says, "Well, would you like to go to the instrument shop over there in A and R?" And I said, "I sure would like to." So, uh.. I don't know if I was second class then or not. I may have-- may have been if-- anyway, I was right in there. So I went over to the instrument shop and I stayed there. This was in '40-- '42, yeah, '42, I think I went into the third class. I think it was Aug-- July of- Ja- can't-- that can't be right. Can't be

right-- '45. Anyway, I made chief, uh.. right there in the shop, and I was still a slick arm when I made chief. <Laughing>

Q: Okay. What's a slick arm?

Milton Thomas Hurst: No stripes, less than four years, yeah.

Q: Oh, okay. No hash marks.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah, yeah. Less than four years. And I took over the- the whole shop, had about 70 people. And, uh.. stayed there and the only way you could get back to the States was through a set of orders. So, by that time, they'd established some instrument schools in Chicago, 87th and Anthony [ph?] in Chicago, Illinois, so I got a set of orders to go back there some time, oh, in, I guess, summer, fall of uh.. '43, and I was-- I was chief by then. So I'd made chief that early. And so I went to 87th and Anthony to school and, uh.. then when I came back from there, somebody had taken my chair at Ford Island, so that I took over the shop over at Barber's Point, and there.

Q: I am going to back you up to the night of December 7th. You're in the receiving station. What was the atmosphere like in there? What kind of things were you talking about or discussing?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh. Uh.. yeah, uh.. damage to our ships. And that night, uh.. the searchlights were on and aircraft were flying over a little bit, and it was panicsville that night for most people and...

Q: What kind of things made it panicsville? What kind of things were you seeing that made it panicky?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I don't know what I was seeing. I really wasn't outside too much, except the-- when, uh.. the searchlights come on, the sirens rang, and then you go out to see what's going on. But otherwise, you're pretty well beat up and tired. Y- you want to just get some more sleep and get some eat, and you're worried, yeah. But at the same time, y- says the uh..-- you're-- you get attuned to stress and you handle stress. You don't let it beat you, you know. So that's the situation that's existing out there.

What am I gonna do about it, you know? You're not-- y- you don't panic.
You- you- what- what am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to go. Not
"where can" but "where am I supposed to." You know, things like that that go
through my mind.

Q: So, were you involved in any of the recovery operations, or did you stay
with the <inaudible>?

Milton Thomas Hurst: No. No. By that time, our squadron was working
and, uh.. I didn't even go back up by the ships hardly at all. In fact, they
tore-- when they tore the teak deck off, uh.. I didn't even go up to get a piece
of the teak deck, but somebody brought me a piece and made a name plate
out of it. But uh.. I watched the Oklahoma as they rigged that to roll it back
up. Uh.. I- I imagine that I walked back to the Arizona to see, really, what
happened, you know. And it's-- you say, "My God, how could-- how does this
happen?" Would you s- see that, would you? And this type of thing. But uh..
that's 60 years ago, gosh, man, I've-- <laughing> you forget stuff, my God.

M1: Okay. So, when you heard the way the fire and rescue party and the
general course, was that by 1MC or Claxton [ph?] or by bugle?

Milton Thomas Hurst: It was, uh.. by word of mouth over the 1MC.

M1: Okay. It was the 1MC-- make sure.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yep.

M1: Now, when the war ended, were you still on Kaneohe when the war
ended?

Milton Thomas Hurst: No. No, the-- I didn't-- you go to Kaneohe, you went
to Barber's Point.

M1: Oh. Barber's Point, right.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. No, the last six months, uh.. they shipped me
out to Guam to take over the forward instrument shop out there because we

were about out of work. Everything had moved west. So, no, the last six months, I was at Guam, and then from Guam I rode an LST for 31 days back to the West Coast, saw those airplanes flying over and I couldn't get into one.
<Laughing>

M1: And then you were discharged there. You got out of the Navy on the West Coast after the war?

Milton Thomas Hurst: No. No, I uh.. I'm an East Coast man, born and raised there. My wife was on- in Brooklyn there, and I wanted the East Coast, so I went back to, uh.. Lido Beach, Long Island, for discharge. And my time was up, and uh.. come time to discharge, you know, I- I don't want to get out of the Navy, I want to reenlist. So I reenlisted right there in the discharge station. And got by orders, and where do you think I got orders to? Kaneohe Bay. <Laughing>

M1: You and Hawaii got along, huh?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. Seven and a half years out there, yep. Loved it.

M1: Now, did you ever get a chance to fly in the Curtis SOC, observation aircraft as a mechanic? Did they ever give you a chance to fly in it?

Milton Thomas Hurst: No. No, I didn't. Uh.. I did, I guess, about three flights, because we were back in the States for-- while we had a- a yard availability for the Arizona up in Washington, we stayed at-- in Long Beach, uh.. with our aircraft. And I got a couple, three indoctrination flights there.

M1: Is that the first time you'd ever flown in an airplane?

Milton Thomas Hurst: No. No, I flew in an airplane when I was like this, old wocko [ph?] airplane.

M1: So- so that was another motivator for you wanted to go into aviation because you had some experience with it?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yes, yeah. Uh-huh.

M1: Now, it sounds like that-- so, before you went to instrument school, your training in aviation was all OJT, on-the-job training. Is that true?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yes. Yeah. I ne- I didn't make aviation, uh..

M1: There's no A school or...

Milton Thomas Hurst: School, no, no, I didn't make A school, no.

M1: So it's all OJT until they send you to the instrument <inaudible>.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Just OJT, yep.

M1: Okay. Okay.

Q: This might be a good place to change tapes.

M1: Okay.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Okay. You mean I'm too long winded?

Q: No.

M1: No. No.

Q: We've only got half-hour tapes.

M1: Right. Our tapes are too short. That's the Air Force short tapes.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh. <coughing>

Q: This is the time [ph?] to cough now. I don't know where I'm picking that up. How am I doing?

M1: Fine. Fine. No, that's great, great. <Pause> <beep> Okay. Rolling any time you want to start.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Okay.

M1: Well, sir, you mentioned that you were a, I believe the term was a slicked, slick sleeve?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Slick arm.

M1: Slick armed chief.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Slicked arm chief, yep.

M1: That's pretty interesting. It's very hard for us to make it nowadays in a short amount of time. How exactly did you make it in those-- in under four years. Was your technical rate, was that the prime motivator?

Milton Thomas Hurst: It was probably part of the reason, yes, but uh.. also, there were time limits there. But, uh.. I think the-- I made up through second class by time limits and passing the test and the whole nine yards. I think I got a-- probably a, uh.. three or four months' waiver going up to first class, but then from first class to chief I think I got about a six months or something like that. Uh.. but let me say this. I was technically qualified and because, what happened there at Ford Island, where we lived in the barracks there, there were probably six or eight of us fellows that every night, we'd go out on the lawn, we had our study books, our study guides with us. And each night, some one of those was the leader of the discussion, and he knew the day before what he was gonna have to teach or be the leader on, on a subject, when his turn came. So all of us sat there from after chow until dark studying. And, uh.. relating experiencing. Of course, there was all different types of rates. So, that- that's the way that we studied. And that's-- we all made it the same time. No- no problem.

Q: A study group.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah, a study group, yeah. And just something we generated ourselves.

Q: Great.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. But, uh.. we were all people that, uh.. I think that liked the Navy. We wanted to get ahead. I think all of us had somewhat leadership ability at that time. And one thing about the Navy, you may know this or you may not know it. If you'll take responsibility, it will damn sure be given to you. <all laughing> And that's the truth.

Q: That hasn't changed.

Milton Thomas Hurst: No.

M1: Now, at this time, did you consider yourself a battle ship sailor or an Airdale? Or was there a distinctive that you, once you ____ to the B section, did you consider yourself an Airdale or-- or still a battle ship sailor? Or was there any differentiation?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I don't know as I made any differentiation.

M1: Okay.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Uh.. b- I had-- I was aboard the ship, but I was in aviation there. I was called an Airdale naturally if-- when I was aboard ship, but when you get in-- aboard an air station, you're no longer an Airdale. <Laughing> You're a mech or whatever.

M1: Okay. Okay. Well, still-- it's a-- how much total service did you have in the United States Navy at ____.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Thirty years, six months and 15 days.

M1: So you went into the reserve after getting out, or did you?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I'll shoot you if you don't stop it.

M1: All right.

Milton Thomas Hurst: You're talking to United States Navy <laughing> retired.

M1: All right. Okay. Well, could you give us a capsule, a summation afterwards of what your career was?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, boy. Yeah, after-- I've told you up to Kaneohe.

M1: Yes, sir. You went to Kaneohe.

Milton Thomas Hurst: And after Kaneohe, it was back to, uh.. Annacostia [ph?] for duty there. From Annacostia it was down Guantanamo Bay, and then from Guantanamo Bay back to Jacks- or to Jacksonville. But that-- oh, yeah, I should tell you. I was a mech. It was-- when I graduated from the instrument school in Chicago, they changed my rate to ACMMI. That's Aviation Machinist Mates Instrument Specialist.

M1: Okay.

Milton Thomas Hurst: And that stuck with me until I got to Annacostia. And, by that time, Lord, you should have been in then, you'd have never made it. Uh.. they changed me back to an electrician from being aviation electrician from an instrument man because they did away with the specialty rates. And, uh.. I went over to the bureau to see who was the senior aviator on the Pennsylvania when we were in Bat Div One [ph?] and saw him. And "Golly, darn, I'm a mech. I'm not an electrician." He said, "Milty, let me show you the- the list here." I'm about 650 percent over on chief mechs. I'm only about 300 percent over on aviation electricians." He said, "Now what am I gonna do?" I says, "Captain, thank you very much." And I became an electrician. <Laughing> And, uh.. so that was in Annacostia but Gitmo, learned to play golf there. And from Gitmo to- to Jacksonville to teach in AEB

school. Well, I get up on a platform or-- I didn't get on a platform. When I went there, I didn't know ohm's law, and that's the basic thing in electrical. And I didn't know it. But- but three years later, when I left there, I had taught every class in that school, and I spent up to 3, 4 o'clock in the morning most of the weekdays, and they'd let you know if- if you didn't do your homework the night before. They didn't care if they didn't do their homework, but you better do yours <laughing> so you could be real sharp to teach 'em, you know. Try to open up that zipper. But, uh.. I enjoyed that tremendously.

M1: So after that you...

Milton Thomas Hurst: Then, uh.. from there I went into a- an early-warning squadron up in Patuxent [ph?] River, the old Willie [ph?] Victors, squadrons.

M1: Yes.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Went in those, and I was chief electrician there in that shop. I think I had six or seven other chiefs working for me, top heavy squadron if you ever saw one. Good golly. People that were supposed to be in command of destroyers were flying aircraft, you know, just terrible. But from there, uhm.. to Alameda, to Via 52, went out west packing [ph?], came back from there and got orders back to Jacksonville to teach school again. And, uh.. made E8, that's on the west backpack [ph?] crews [ph?]. And, uh.. then got back to Jacksonville teaching school. Oh, and while I was in VW, put in for warrant officer and waited and waited and waited and I gave up on it. Well, I get back to AE school, here comes warrant officers through. So, I made warrant officer, and I don't even know what year it was, probably '59 or something like that. So I made warrant officer and then aboard the Valley Forge as, uh.. fuels [ph?] officer. And then, uh.. from the Valley Forge, <sound> gee whiz, I guess back to NAS, no, ____, back to NAS Jacksonville, uh.. and I became ground support equipment officer for-- in the AIMD department. From there to the America, and I was hanger deck officer, and then moved on up to flight deck officer, assistant flight deck officer, and uh.. I made, uh.. I made warrant <coughing>-- I made W2, Ensign and JG all in the same day.

M1: Whoa.

<all laughing>

Q: I'm impressed.

<all laughing>

Milton Thomas Hurst: So, what it was, I had my 18 months in as a W1. At that time, uh.. it took 18 months...

Q: To make Ensign.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Uh.. to make Ensign. And I had my may-- 18 months in, so I went from W1 through Ensign. I had to be-- go through Ensign, too, Ensign to JG. <Laughing>

Q: Must have been an interesting pinning ceremony.

<all laughing>

Milton Thomas Hurst: Interest- interesting life. So, anyway, then I'm back to-- I miss- I missed something in _____. Anyway, after- after the am-

Q: American?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah, went aboard America, yeah. After the America, I- I went back to Cecil Field in Jacksonville as support equipment officer. And, uh.. I retired there in, uh.. as lieutenant commander in 1970, first of the July in 1970.

M1: So you retired as lieutenant commander.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. And then I turned my hat around and went back to work for Nav Air.

<all laughing>

M1: As a civilian.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah.

M1: What-- you went to all these duty assignments. Now, I'm sure as you went to each of these duty assignments, word went around that you were an Arizona survivor. Did that affect how you were treated or what people would say to you? Did that have any-- do you think that that had any effect?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Very, very few people knew of it.

M1: Pardon me?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Very few people knew that.

M1: Oh.

Milton Thomas Hurst: My family hardly knew that.

Q: Oh, really?

Milton Thomas Hurst: They- they knew it, but, uh.. I didn't-- m- my son had learned more about what I did out here this trip than he's ever known in his life.

M1: So it really didn't affect the rest of your career?

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, no, no, I don't think so. If it affected it, it- it was only through somebody else's thoughts, not mine.

M1: Okay.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Uh..

M1: To tell, you'd never come out and say, "I'm an Arizona survivor."

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, he- no, I never come out and let everybody know I was an Arizona survivor, no. No.

M1: Okay. So- so it would be a fluke if anybody ever found out. You were just another...

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah.

M1: Chief or warrant officer, or officer in the unit.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah.

M1: <Inaudible>.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Or you- you'd meet somebody that you knew back then, you know, as-- and you'd- you'd shoot the breeze over old times and- and this.

M1: The talking about it never came up, was never- you never felt it was a factor in your career?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

M1: Okay.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Uh.. I never got any awards or anything like that until just before I got out of the Navy, I got a commendation at, uh.. for designing a- an electrical distribution for aircraft, but, uh.. which made me a lot of money later on.

<all laughing>

Q: Nothing wrong with that. That's okay.

Milton Thomas Hurst: So, no it's- it's as I told this reporter with CNN the other day, uh.. I gave him a little interview, about like you're- you're getting here. And he was prying. And I told him, "Hey, I'll tell you just like I told everybody else, just like I'll tell you, I have thoughts in my head, and I know things that they're my thoughts. They're not your thoughts. They're not open for publication. You don't need to know about them. And if I disclosed them to you, that denigrates my thoughts. It takes away something from me, and I'm not gonna give it to you."

Q: Is there anything you shared with your son that you can share with us that you haven't shared with us?

Milton Thomas Hurst: No. No. It's- it- why burden him?

Q: That's fine.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah, it's- it's just a-- it's a life, that I'll tell this young fellow right here, stay in the Navy and the torch is passed. You- you- some people say, "Oh, you're a hero." No. I'm not a hero, you're not a hero. The only thing we ever did, and you did, too, you decided to join the service. After you once joined the service, you haven't got any-- much control over where you're assigned or what you do or what your duties are, and you are only taught to respond to situations. And if you respond to that situation, you're supposed to do that. That doesn't make you a hero. There are true heroes, there really are, that well beyond, those are the true heroes. But just being in a battle, you know, that doesn't make you a hero. That's what you're there for. So, old Turkey Neck Graham. You've probably heard about Turkey Neck, haven't you?

M1: I've heard the name.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah, Turkey Neck Graham was our leading first class on the America. He's the fellow that cut the vestal [ph?] loose. Now, he was out there, and they were shooting at him, trying to get him, and he was out there with an axe chopping the hawsers. Now, there's a guy that exposed himself unnecessarily, or because I'm sure Turkey'd say, "No. I had to do it. I knew it had to be done. I did it." And that's all there is to it. So, good luck. The torch is passed. <Laughing>

Q: Any other questions? Anything else you want to tell, any-- any other thoughts you want to leave with us before we conclude?

Milton Thomas Hurst: I don't think so. I think- I think you see it didn't affect me much, did it?

Q: No. No. I've enjoyed this a lot. And I- I really appreciate taking the time to talk with us and pass the torch, which I have kind of done myself. My son's in boot camp now, so I'm ____ passing torches down, too.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Oh, good. Uh-huh. Good.

Q: And it's a marvelous thing that we could get your thoughts on tape and thank you for the years in service to your country and the continued service that you're doing now.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Neither one of my sons really wanted to go in.

Q: Oh, he joined the Army Reserve, not the Navy.

Milton Thomas Hurst: Yeah. My- my older son is a-- was, uh.. Reserve for a while. He was in the Navy in college as a photo interpreter <inaudible>. But he's got a pretty good job today. He's Jack Nicholas's pilot.

Q: <Laughing> Okay.

Milton Thomas Hurst: He flies all over the world.

Q: Well, I think we're going to conclude with that, then.

Milton Thomas Hurst: <Laughing>

Q: Yeah, we're done.

End of Tape 411 Milton Thomas Hurst